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Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

6810th meeting

Thursday, 19 July 2012, 10.25 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Osorio	(Colombia)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	France	Mr. Araud
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Mashabane
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2043 (2012) (S/2012/523)

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12-42815 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2043 (2012) (S/2012/523)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members have before them document S/2012/538, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, Germany, Portugal, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

Members also have before them document S/2012/547/Rev.2, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/523, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2043 (2012).

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolutions before it. If I hear no objection, in accordance with rule 32 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, which states that "[p]rincipal motions and draft resolutions shall have precedence in the order of their submission", I shall put the draft resolution contained in document S/2012/538 to the vote first.

I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Azerbaijan, Colombia, France, Germany, Guatemala, India, Morocco, Portugal, Togo, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

Against:

China, Russian Federation

Abstentions:

Pakistan, South Africa

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 11 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting on the draft resolution contained in document S/2012/538.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is appalled by the decision of Russia and China to veto the draft resolution (S/2012/538) aimed at bringing an end to the bloodshed in Syria and at creating the conditions for a meaningful political process. This is the third time that Russia and China have blocked the efforts of the Council to address the crisis in Syria.

More than 14,000 innocent Syrians have been killed since Russia and China first vetoed our efforts to stem the violence in October 2011 (see S/PV.6627). Since then, the regime has intensified its use of heavy weapons in population centres, including the use of artillery and helicopter gunships. More than 100 civilians are being killed every day. The events in Damascus over the past 48 hours demonstrate the need for urgent and decisive action by the Security Council to stop the downward spiral into chaos, which will claim many more innocent lives and affect the stability of the region. Meanwhile, the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) has been rendered inoperable due to the dangerous security situation.

Against that backdrop, we proposed eight days ago a draft resolution aimed at changing the situation on the ground for the better. Its logic was simple and clear — to use the collective weight of the Council to provide greater support to the work of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and his efforts to secure implementation of his six-point plan. In so doing, we were aiming to create the prospect of a reduction in violence by all sides and the conditions for the political process agreed by the ministerial Action Group for Syria in Geneva on 30 June, and to promote a conducive environment in which the United Nations Mission could resume its operations. We put the draft resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter as a clear signal to all parties that their commitments were binding.

Both the Secretary-General and Mr. Annan had repeatedly requested that the Council stipulate serious consequences for non-compliance with the six-point plan and resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). That is precisely what we did in proposing draft resolution S/2012/538. It is an approach supported by the Arab League and all key regional actors. It focuses on the removal of heavy weapons as a first step, because we had been repeatedly told by the Envoy and the Secretary-General that it was the first and most urgent problem that must be tackled and the one most likely to alter the dynamic on the ground.

Yet throughout the negotiation process, Russia and China chose not to support the course of action proposed by the Envoy. They claimed their agreement to a transition plan in Geneva as a great step forward, but when it came to turning words into action, taking the decisions required to implement the two resolutions that they have supported and securing an improvement on the ground that might eventually lead to progress against the transition plan, they chose to refuse engagement.

They argued that a Chapter VII draft resolution was somehow designed to seek military action through the back door. Those arguments are irrational. The Council has adopted many Chapter VII resolutions, most recently on the Sudan and South Sudan. Today's draft resolution, like that one, was set under Article 41. It was not under Article 42 of the Charter and could not therefore be construed as a precursor to military intervention.

We offered flexibility on Russia and China's concerns and gave them more time. But still, they refused to engage. Instead, they advocated more of the same approach that has consistently failed to have an effect. Instead of the pressure that Mr. Annan had requested, they advocated relying on Al-Assad's empty promises — the same promises that had been made and broken with predictable consistency since November last year. Instead of trying to generate the conditions in which the United Nations Mission could become effective, they argued for its extension in a manner that willfully ignored the fact that it was currently unable to operate.

By exercising their veto today, Russia and China have failed in their responsibilities as permanent members of the Security Council to help resolve the crisis in Syria. They have failed to provide the Joint Envoy and the Secretary-General with the support they have asked for. They have failed the people of Syria. They have, for the third time, blocked an attempt by the majority of the Council and supported by most of the international community to try a new approach. The effect of their actions will be to protect a brutal regime. They have chosen to put their national interests ahead of the lives of millions of Syrians.

The consequences of their decision are obvious — further bloodshed and the likelihood of a descent into all-out civil war. For our part, we shall continue to work with the Envoy, the Secretary-General and responsible members of the international community to achieve the political transition that is the only way forward for Syria. It is deeply regrettable that the Council has been unable today to play the role for which it was established and is duty-bound to fulfil.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I had hoped not to have to go through this ghastly list. By 4 October 2011, repression in Syria had already claimed 3,000 lives and Russia and China vetoed the Council's action for the first time (see S/PV.6627). By 4 February, 6,000 Syrians had been cut down by the regime, and Russia and China exercised their second veto on the Council's action (see S/PV.6711). Today, 19 July, we now count 17,000 men, women and children dead. We mourn their memory alongside the Syrian people, and Russia and China have just exercised their veto of the Council's action for the third time.

We have done all in our power since the double veto in February to ensure that the international community could finally agree on a coordinated approach that would respond to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental human rights.

We have attempted to rally the international community around the mission of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. On the basis of those proposals, resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) were adopted. An observer mission was deployed on the ground. A transition plan was agreed in Geneva on 30 June (S/2012/523, annex), in which we, alongside Russia and China, recognized the right of the Syrian people to a democratic future, with credible, legitimate leaders chosen by the Syrian people themselves.

It is now clear that Russia merely wants to win time for the Syrian regime to crush the opposition. For 17 months now, and with 17,000 dead, Russia and China

have advocated soft pressure and diplomatic contact and have assigned responsibility for implementation of the process to the parties alone. Contacts with President Al-Assad are systematically deemed to be encouraging. The only matter deemed urgent has been the need to wait. And it would appear that one is always too harsh with bloodthirsty dictators.

But let us look at the facts. The provisions adopted by the Council have been systematically violated by the Syrian regime, which has not even started to implement the first of its commitments. Since 21 March, the Council has demanded that the Syrian authorities cease the use of heavy weapons and withdraw their troops from the cities. In that time, the civilian population has been crushed by heavy artillery and attacks by combat helicopters. In his report of 6 July (S/2012/523), the Secretary-General can only note the intensification of these attacks on the civilian population. Between bombardments, the regime sends its terrifying militias to cut throats, kidnap, rape and generate inter-communal fear among the civilian population.

In response, the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Envoy have called on the Security Council to ensure that its decisions are implemented. That message was echoed by the Secretary General of the League of Arab States here, a month ago, and by the 107 States that met in Paris within the framework of the Group of Friends of Syria on 6 July.

That simple message has just come up against the rejection of both Russia and China. Our draft resolution (S/2012/538) included only a mere threat of sanctions. It gave the regime 10 days to finally abide by its commitments. Ten days is a long time when a single decision would be enough to immediately halt the use of heavy weapons in civilian neighbourhoods. It is too long, as each day brings 100 new deaths. It was then up to the Council itself to decide whether or not its decisions had been implemented. It was up to the Council to choose the sanctions it deemed necessary to apply. The Council thus remained master of the subsequent steps.

It will be said that the veto is the result of disagreement on the way to achieve a common objective. That is wrong. Russia and China have today exercised a veto to all of the laborious work undertaken by the Council in recent months to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. We cannot simply call for political transition ad infinitum. We must establish a credible momentum for transition. To refuse to grant Mr. Kofi Annan the tools to exert pressure that he has requested in order to implement the road map that we entrusted him with in New York and in Geneva is to undermine his mission itself. We must not shirk our responsibilities.

The third veto on Syria means that, for Russia and China, there will be no consequences for the Syrian regime's disregard of its commitments. The crimes will go unpunished; their perpetrators will continue to proceed with their disgusting plans; the people's legitimate aspirations can be disregarded; and the victims are insignificant in number. History will prove them wrong; history will judge them. It is already doing so right now in Damascus.

We have gone as far as the veto in full awareness of the situation. We cannot be complicit in a strategy that combines a mockery of diplomatic action with de facto paralysis. To do that would have been to give short shrift to our responsibility as a permanent member of the Council, short shrift to the credibility of this Chamber, which cannot serve as a fig leaf for impunity, and short shrift to the Syrian people.

I now turn to those men and women in Syria who, in the face of unheard-of suffering, continue to carry the torch of their ideal of liberty. France pays homage to them. I will say again what I said on 4 February: no, once again, the double veto will not stop us. We will continue to support the Syrian opposition on its road to a democratic transition in Syria. In every forum, France is resolved to work unceasingly with those who share its values — and the meeting in Paris showed that there were many of them — so that the violence perpetrated on the Syrian people can be ended, their legitimate aspirations are realized fairly and swiftly, and the perpetrators of crimes, and their accomplices, are brought to justice.

This double veto leaves the Security Council helpless against the violence of the Syrian regime, but France will not leave the Syrian people to face the crimes to which they are victim alone.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): When the people of Syria peacefully took to the streets more than a year ago, their legitimate demands for freedom and participation were met with deadly force. Instead of initiating meaningful political dialogue, the regime of President Al-Assad responded with increased repression.

From the start, we have warned against this spiral of violence. We had strong concerns about the mayhem it might bring to the whole region. We called on President Al-Assad to embark on a process of credible political reform. The Arab League, with the overwhelming support of the international community, laid out a plan for a peaceful political process. But President Al-Assad did not listen.

Together with our partners, we worked to have the Security Council act to stop the violence and human rights abuses at a time when such action could have prevented worse from happening. It is well known to all how those attempts were rendered futile. Today, more than 15,000 deaths later, Damascus is at war with the Syrian people. What started as a peaceful protest movement has in some parts evolved into armed opposition. That, too, could have been avoided.

But with every day that the Al-Assad regime escalated its violent repression, with every new shelling, with every new massacre it became more difficult for those Syrian voices that promoted peaceful change to convince those who had lost hope for a political solution. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the situation in Syria is now one of civil war. Let me be clear: responsibility for that lies fully with President Al-Assad and his regime.

Al-Assad has failed to protect the Syrian people. He has broken all commitments, made first to his people, then to the Arab League and later to Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. Mr. Annan personally told President Al-Assad that he had to send bold signals; but what he sent instead were tanks, mortars and helicopter gunships.

The Security Council has a responsibility to help the Syrian people find a peaceful solution. Kofi Annan's six-point plan, endorsed by the Council, was meant to de-escalate the crisis, bring down the level of violence and start a meaningful political process. As a first step, the Syrian Government had to stop using heavy weapons and withdraw both heavy weapons and troops from population centres. Remember, it was Al-Assad himself who made that commitment. We supported those decisions, and we supported sending observers to Syria, despite the severe risks and reservations. But the hopes we had placed in those resolutions (2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012)) were soon shattered. As Kofi Annan himself has said, none of the elements of the six-point plan have been implemented. Instead of silencing the heavy weapons, the Al-Assad regime unleashed its tanks and attack helicopters. Al-Assad used the heavy weapons that he had pledged not to use anymore.

The Council cannot continue business as usual. The Joint Envoy, Mr. Annan himself, has been clear about what he expects from Damascus and from the Security Council. First, he told President Al-Assad to immediately stop using heavy weapons in populated areas. Secondly, he has repeatedly stressed that the responsibility to act lies first with Damascus. And thirdly, he has repeatedly called on the Council to insist on the implementation of its decisions and to send a strong signal that there will be consequences for non-compliance.

Our draft resolution (S/2012/538) would have done what Mr. Annan himself has asked us to do. By endorsing the Annan plan and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) under Chapter VII of the Charter, we would have obliged both sides — I repeat, both sides — to immediately implement the draft resolution's provisions. The draft resolution would have threatened Damascus with sanctions aimed at stopping the indiscriminate shelling of populated areas. Such shelling violates international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions and hinders any chance of a political process. Ending it would have finally opened up space for the observer mission to again play a meaningful role.

In conclusion, let me make a further point clear. Our goal has been to achieve unity in the Council. We have conducted our negotiations in that spirit, a spirit that was not reciprocated by all Council members. The draft resolution would not have set the stage for military intervention, as some have falsely claimed. It would not have undermined Joint Special Envoy Annan and the observer mission; quite the contrary, it would have supported him and the observers on the ground. And while it would not have been a silver bullet for bringing about peace in Syria, it would have provided a realistic chance — maybe the last chance — for finally breaking the vicious circle of violence.

Today was an opportunity lost. History will show us the price that the people in Syria and beyond will have to pay. As for my delegation, I can say that together with our partners, we have tried our utmost. In the end, this was and is our moral responsibility. While the days of President Al-Assad are numbered, people in Syria are going through times of unspeakable hardship.

I want to assure the Syrian people that Germany will continue to support all those who cherish peace, freedom and democracy. One day there will be a new Syria. We call on all those within the Syrian regime to seriously consider their future options, because one thing is certain: there will be change.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): These are trying and most unfortunate circumstances for Syria and its people. The increasing violence, killings and violations of human rights in Syria, which are being attributed to both sides but of which innocent civilians are the main victims, are totally unacceptable and must be condemned. Our position in the Security Council has been motivated primarily by the desire to end the violence and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, as well as to address their legitimate aspirations. That is also the desire of the wider international community. And there was agreement that the best way to address this increasingly complex and volatile situation was through a political process led and owned by the Syrians. Militarization could only take us away from a peaceful solution and cause even greater suffering for the Syrian people, as is evident from recent developments.

After an initial period of division and stalemate, what brought the entire Council together was the mission of the Joint Special Envoy, Kofi Annan, and his six-point plan. The Council subsequently agreed unanimously to deploy the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS), the value of which has been acknowledged by all despite the circumstances under which it has had to work. The Secretary-General has accordingly recommended the continuation of UNSMIS. As the situation on the ground got worse we saw other avenues explored, such as the 30 June Action Group for Syria meeting in Geneva, the outcome of which (S/2012/523, annex) Pakistan also agreed to support in good faith, even though we, like many others, were not part of that process. The objective was again to continue support for the Envoy's plan and the efforts for a political settlement.

Pakistan believes that the success of the Council's collective and stated objective to achieve a peaceful solution in Syria hinged on a united approach, as has also been consistently emphasized by the Special Envoy. This was a time for the Council to remain united and to build on the Geneva outcome, which provided openings for the much-needed political track. It was also an opportunity for all sides, especially the most influential quarters, to throw their genuine and full weight behind the Special Envoy's efforts by engaging and working with the parties.

It is unfortunate that, despite the clear objective of supporting Mr. Annan's efforts and despite the gravity of the situation, the Council's unity was undermined by the divergence of views on how to move forward. As a result, the Council has ended up not moving at all. This is a serious setback that could have been avoided had the divisive issues of Chapter VII and coercive measures been set aside.

From the outset, Pakistan expressed its reservations about a coercive approach, which in our view could further escalate tensions and be counterproductive and unhelpful in the pursuit of a pacific settlement of the situation. A constructive spirit of flexibility was necessary to bring all Council members on the same page and to ensure that the Syrian crisis was resolved with minimum damage to the country and without extra-territorial repercussions. Regrettably, that spirit was not upheld in the run-up to the draft resolution (S/2012/538) that has just been put to a vote. Our repeated calls for a united, consensus approach by the Council were not heeded. We were therefore left with no choice but to dissociate ourselves from the divisive scenario that the Council has been led into, and thus to abstain in the voting on the draft resolution.

As we have said before, this is not and must not be a blame game, as any success of failure of the Council will always be collective. The environment of uncertainty resulting from today's actions is extremely dangerous and explosive. We therefore need to pick up the pieces and quickly get our act together for the sake of peace and of the Syrian people. We urge both sides to eschew violence and to facilitate a Syrian-led political process. Primary responsibility in this regard lies with the Syrian Government. The forthcoming month of Ramadan should be a reason for all sides to declare a truce and engage in dialogue. That has become all the more evident due to the condemnable suicide attack targeting the Syrian leadership yesterday.

We believe that a continued UNSMIS presence on the ground is crucial to facilitating and supporting peace efforts. We are of the view that linking its mandate extension to Chapter VII and coercive measures was not the right course of action. We would therefore like to propose, as an interim measure, a draft resolution for a technical rollover of UNSMIS for a short period, pending Council agreement on the vital issues for a way forward.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): Let me begin by conveying our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Syria on the terrorist attack in Damascus yesterday, which caused the death of a number of high officials, including the Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Daoud Rajha. We strongly condemn that mindless and cowardly act of terrorism.

India remains gravely concerned at the events unfolding in Syria, which have resulted in the death of several thousand civilians and security force personnel. From the beginning of the crisis, we have called for the cessation of violence in all its forms and by all sides. We condemn all violence irrespective of who its perpetrators are. We voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 66/253, authorizing the appointment of an envoy to engage with the Syrian parties and foreign actors for the resolution of the crisis. We have consistently supported the mission of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. We also supported resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) in the expectation that the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS) would be able to oversee the implementation of Mr. Annan's six-point plan and facilitate the cessation of violence and the commencement of a Syrian-led political process to address the grievances of the Syrian people and meet their legitimate aspirations.

Unfortunately, all parties have failed to comply with their obligations under the six-point plan. Instead of a political process, the parties have continued to pursue a military approach that continues to cause death and destruction in the country. There is an urgent need for the Syrian parties to recommit themselves to the complete cessation of violence and a comprehensive implementation of the six-point plan.

Syria has been, both historically and in contemporary times, an important country in the Middle East. Its role in the Middle East peace process and in ensuring the stability of the wider region cannot be overemphasized. Prolonged instability and unrest in Syria therefore have ramifications for the entire region and beyond. Given the complexity of the ground realities in Syria, we believe that it is necessary to retain the presence of UNSMIS, to bear impartial witness to events, and to assist the Syrian parties at all levels in their search for a solution to the crisis without further bloodshed. An UNSMIS presence is also necessary to facilitate the implementation of the six-point plan and the Action Group for Syria's final communiqué (S/2012/523, annex), which are the only viable processes for the engagement of the international community in the resolution of the Syrian crisis. We have therefore supported action by the international community that addresses the Syrian crisis in a balanced and impartial manner.

We voted in favour of draft resolution S/2012/538 today to facilitate united action by the Security Council in support of the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy. It may be noted that the draft resolution supported the extension of the UNSMIS mandate and the implementation of the six-point plan and the Action Group's final communiqué in their entirety.

In our view, it would have been preferable for the Council members to show flexibility so that a united message could be conveyed to all sides in the Syrian crisis, instead of pursuing domestic interests. It is therefore regrettable that the Council has not been able to adopt a resolution today and send the joint message that was sought by Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. In spite of the vote today, we urge all Council members to reconsider their approach and ensure that the UNSMIS mandate is extended and the mission of Kofi Annan supported, so that the Syrian crisis can be resolved without any further bloodshed. We remain committed to engaging with fellow Council members to that end.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Portugal is deeply disappointed that the Security Council was not able to remain united in support of the six-point plan and the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy. The purpose of the draft resolution S/2012/538, which we co-sponsored, was to reinforce the Council's commitment to the Annan plan in a manner that could ensure its immediate and effective implementation and to stop the violence and the systematic violations of human rights taking place in Syria.

We very much regret that, despite the flexibility demonstrated by the sponsors, the Council failed to heed the reiterated calls of the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Envoy for united, sustained and effective pressure in order to implement its decisions and send a message to all that there will be serious consequences for continued non-compliance. We have indeed tried our utmost to preserve the unity of the Council.

On 21 April the Council mandated the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) to monitor a ceasefire and support implementation of the six-point plan. UNSMIS was devised as a means to an end, namely, the creation, through the full

implementation of the six-point plan, of a conducive environment for the political process and the Syrian-led transition to democracy in conformity with the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

Since then, the situation on the ground has only worsened, and the level of violence has increased daily to unfathomable levels. Eighteen months into this persistent conflict, the country continues to slip into civil war and chaos, destabilizing neighbouring countries and threatening the integrity of Syria itself, with grave risks for regional peace and security.

Three months after the adoption of resolution 2043 (2012), the six-point plan has yet to be implemented. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the armed conflict. The Syrian armed forces persist in their indiscriminate use of tanks, heavy artillery and helicopters to systematically shell populated areas in blatant violation of the Council's resolutions. UNSMIS operations remain suspended owing to the security conditions on the ground.

Events in Damascus over the past days have dramatically underlined the urgent need for concerted action by the Security Council to enforce Joint Special Envoy Annan's plan. The draft resolution (see S/2012/538) vetoed by the Russian Federation and China sought precisely that, namely by placing the six-point plan and the political conditions set out by the Action Group in Geneva on 30 June 2012, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. It also sought to ensure an immediate end to all violence and to promote a permissive environment on the ground, without which a reconfigured UNSMIS will not be able to undertake its mandated task effectively and safely.

Contrary to what some have argued, the imposition of sanctions in the eventuality of continued noncompliance would not be automatic. It would require another Security Council resolution. Moreover, by restricting eventual coercive action to measures under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, the text clearly excluded any possibility of a military intervention.

Portugal firmly believes that to be effective, to be credible and to fulfil its responsibilities, the Council must exert united, sustained and effective pressure on all sides, and on the Syrian authorities in particular, in light of their primary responsibility under the six-point plan to put an end to the violence. We very much regret that, once again, this was not possible, with all the dire consequences that failure entails. Nevertheless, Portugal remains ready to continue engaging with all members of the Council to provide meaningful and effective support to the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy Annan.

Finally, Mr. President, allow me a special word of appreciation for Major-General Robert Mood, Chief of UNSMIS, and his able leadership, as well as for all the personnel of UNSMIS. We thank them greatly for their courage, commitment and professionalism in such challenging and perilous circumstances.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The vote that just took place should not have taken place at all. The sponsors of the draft resolution just rejected (S/2012/538) were well aware that it simply stood no chance of being adopted. The Russian delegation had very clearly and consistently explained that we simply cannot accept a document, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, that would open the way for the pressure of sanctions and later for external military involvement in Syrian domestic affairs.

The Western members of the Security Council denied such intentions, but for some reason refused to exclude military intervention. Their calculations to use the Security Council of the United Nations to further their plans of imposing their own designs on sovereign States will not prevail. Instead of levelling crude insinuations against the policy of the Russian Federation, which for the whole period of the conflict in Syria has never slackened in its efforts to find a political solution to the situation and provide key support for the mission of the United Nations-Arab League Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Western members of the Council, which today made unacceptable statements, could have done something, anything, to promote dialogue between the Syrian parties and prevent the further militarization of the Syrian crisis, rather than fan the flames of extremists, including terrorist groups.

These Pharisees have been pushing their own geopolitical intentions, which have nothing in common with the legitimate interests of the Syrian people. This has led to an escalation of the conflict — one that has reached such tragic proportions. Instead of contributing to enhancing the efforts of the international community to settle the crisis in Syria, as provided for in the Geneva document of 30 June 2012 (S/2021/523, annex),

the sponsors of the draft resolution that just failed have attempted to fan the flames of confrontation in the Security Council. The draft just voted on was biased. The threats of sanctions were levelled exclusively at the Government of Syria. That runs counter to the spirit of the Geneva document and does not reflect the realities in the country today. Their approach is especially ambiguous given what took place yesterday in Damascus. I am referring to the grave terrorist attack.

The Western members of the Council have refused to work on the text of the draft resolution (S/2012/547, Rev.2) submitted by the Russian delegation. Its thrust is to bring the members of the Security Council together to further back the Kofi Annan peace plan and to extend the mandate of the Supervision Mission in Syria.

We believe that continued confrontation in the Security Council is useless and counter-productive, and for that reason, we will not submit our draft resolution to a vote. In the present conditions, we would consider it right for the Security Council to adopt a brief de-politicized resolution on a technical extension of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria mandate for a specific period of time. It would be useful to preserve the useful potential of the Mission, even if it is limited in its time. It is important to continue to have the international community back the Special Envoys so they can continue their work on settling the crisis in Syria.

As far as the politicai basis for the Special Envoy's work is concerned, that is covered by the outcome document of the Geneva conference (S/2012/523, annex), which all responsible members of the international community, as well as the Syrian parties, should be guided by.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2012/538) that the Council just failed to adopt. In our judgement, that resolution was the best opportunity and perhaps the only remaining opportunity to put an end to the mindless violence that affects the Syrian Arab Republic and to initiate a political transition led by the Syrians themselves and corresponding to long repressed popular demands.

As is known, the by-no-means trivial issue that impeded a consensus today is based on the resistance that some members have had to invoke Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, which covers the possibility of applying coercive measures in the event of non-compliance with the Council's decisions. That same Article 41 expressly excludes punitive measures, such as the use of armed force. It is one of the measures of preventive diplomacy at the disposal of the Security Council as it seeks to exercise its role in maintaining international peace. We believe that the potential application of sanctions on the grounds of non-compliance was the least we could do, given the sequence of broken commitments on the part of the Government of Syria in recent months.

We deplore the fact that the draft resolution was not approved. We regret the outcome, in the first place, because of the people of Syria, whose children suffer on a daily basis the horrors of the spiral of violence, which began with peaceful protests by citizens against their Government, but has now spawned an armed conflict where barbaric acts can be attributed to both sides. The main thing is to put a stop to the violence, no matter where it comes from, and the key to taking the first step is in the hands of the Government.

Secondly, we regret that the work of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan has been seriously compromised. Even the final communiqué of the so-called Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), adopted just three weeks ago partly as a result of Mr. Annan's creativity, has ended up being a dead letter.

Thirdly, we regret this action because of its impact on the Council and, in more general terms, on the United Nations, whose prestige has suffered a new blow. Our inability to adopt a unified position is a serious setback on this unique occasion, with all that it implies in the real world.

The larger moral of the scene we have just witnessed is not that the Security Council is impotent, because the Council has demonstrated time and again that it can act decisively and firmly to achieve tangible results. The important point here is that we were unable to forge a consensus to fulfil the responsibility entrusted to us by the Charter, which is a major collective failure for us all.

The ultimate irony is that what the draft resolution sought to prevent — an expansion of the wave of violence — will have the perverse effect of achieving the exact opposite. For that reason, what we have just witnessed saddens and disappoints us immensely.

In conclusion, our delegation profoundly regrets that we have not been able to respond to the calls of the League of Arab States, the Joint Special Envoy,

the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the Arab League. We call on all members of the international community to persevere with new initiatives to find a solution that responds to the interests of the Syrian people and especially to avoid the spread of this conflict to the neighbouring countries.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): This is the third time in 10 months that two members, Russia and China, have prevented the Security Council from responding credibly to the Syrian conflict. The first two vetoes they cast were very destructive. This veto is even more dangerous and deplorable.

The draft resolution (S/2012/538) just vetoed demanded that all parties cease violence. It invoked Chapter VII of the Charter to make more binding on the parties their obligation to implement the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy and effect the political transition plan agreed by the Action Group for Syria in Geneva on 30 June. It also threatened the only party with heavy weapons, the Syrian regime, with sanctions if it continued to use those weapons brutally against its own cities and citizens. But it would not even impose sanctions at this stage, and despite the paranoid, if not disingenuous, claims of some to the contrary, it would in no way authorize or even pave the way for foreign military intervention. What the draft resolution would have done was to provide the political support to the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS) that might have given it a fighting chance to accomplish its mandate. It is a shame that the Council was unwilling to do so.

There should be no doubt about this. The only way that unarmed United Nations observers could ever deter violence is if their reports of the Syrian regime's persistent violations of the Annan plan and of their own commitments led the Security Council to impose swift and meaningful consequences for non-compliance, as requested — indeed, demanded — by our Joint Special Envoy. As the United States explained when voting for the establishment of UNSMIS three months ago (see S/PV.6756), we were and remain deeply skeptical of the Syrian regime's intentions, and thus of the efficacy of the observer Mission.

Week after week, the Secretary-General, the Joint Special Envoy, the Head of UNSMIS, General Mood, and others have told the Council that the Al-Assad regime continued to fire heavy weapons in population centres, in contravention of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). Week after week, they told us that the Syrian Government continued to detain and torture citizens and to maintain a horrific posture of intimidation and harassment. They reported recently that the Syrian regime had escalated its crackdown, employing tanks and helicopter gunships. They reported on various occasions that the Syrian-backed shabiha militia were terrorizing entire communities, including by sexually assaulting women and children.

The escalation of the regime's attacks against its own people is even more troubling because of its large stockpiles of chemical weapons. We have made it clear that those weapons must remain secure and that the regime will be held accountable for their use because, as the situation deteriorates, the potential that this regime could consider using chemical weapons against its own people should be a concern for us all.

On 13 July, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon wrote a letter reiterating his call on Council members to

> "insist on the implementation of the Council's resolutions and to exercise their common responsibilities by taking necessary collective action under the United Nations Charter".

Yet the United Nations Mission's reports of persistent and flagrant violations and the appeals of the Secretary-General the Joint Special Envoy have been met only with intensified violence and Security Council inaction.

The blame for that unacceptable situation does not lie with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Joint Special Envoy Annan or the United Nations monitors. Unarmed United Nations military observers and civilian staff have performed their tasks bravely under very dangerous conditions, and we thank them and the troop-contributing countries profoundly for their dedicated service.

Rather the fault lies squarely with the heinous Al-Assad regime and those Member States that refuse to join the international community and their fellow Council members in taking firm action against the regime. Their position is at odds with the majority of the Council that voted in favour of the draft resolution today. It is at odds with the League of Arab States. It is at odds with over 100 countries in the Group of Friends of the Syrian People that called for decisive action under Chapter VII to stop the killing and start a process of transition to post-Al-Assad Syria. And it is at odds with the wishes and aspirations of the vast majority of

the Syrian people, who deserve so much better from the Security Council.

We have missed yet another critical opportunity to work together. We, and especially the people of Syria, cannot afford to miss any more. Yesterday's dramatic attack in Damascus was indicative of how the situation in Syria will continue to deteriorate in the face of the Council's inaction. The perpetuation of the status quo is in no way static. It is in fact a recipe for intensified conflict, increased terrorism and a proxy war that could engulf the region. It is simply not credible to argue that the mere continuation of an unarmed observer mission in the midst of these threats and spiraling violence can or will fundamentally change anything. Everyone in this Chamber knows that.

The United States has not and will not pin its policy on an unarmed observer mission that is deployed in the midst of such widespread violence and that cannot even count on the most minimal support of the Security Council. Instead, we will intensify our work with a diverse range of partners outside the Security Council to bring pressure to bear on the Al-Assad regime and to deliver assistance to those in need.

The Security Council has failed utterly in the most important task on its agenda this year. This is another dark day in Turtle Bay. One can only hope that one day, before too many thousands more die, Russia and China and will stop protecting Al-Assad and allow the Council to play its proper role at the centre of the international response to the crisis in Syria.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): South Africa strongly condemns the continuing violence and the huge loss of life in Syria. It is now 16 months since the crisis began, and there is no end in sight. Instead, the security and humanitarian situations have become worse. The deteriorating situation in Syria highlights the urgency for all sides to stop armed violence in all its forms, implement the six-point plan presented by Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, and move rapidly towards a political dialogue and a peaceful, democratic, Syrian-led transition.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has just classified the situation in Syria as meeting the conditions of an internal armed conflict. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has made a similar statement. This means that the situation has reached the threshold of a civil war, in which all parties have responsibilities and obligations under international humanitarian law.

The highest priority should be to stop the killing and end the suffering of civilians. The suicide bombing in Damascus yesterday, which killed the Syrian Defence Minister and others, coupled with frequent horrific massacres in various parts of the country, clearly indicates that there is more than one party to the conflict. This volatile situation has also become fertile ground for terrorist groups. Acts of violence committed by any party are unacceptable and a clear violation of their commitments under the six-point plan, and should be condemned. Reports of the continued use of heavy weapons by the Syrian security forces are also of serious concern to us.

South Africa strongly supports the efforts of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan and believes that his plan is the only credible mechanism that could deliver a positive and realistic outcome. Coupled with the Annan plan is the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), adopted in Geneva on 30 June. It constitutes a significant proposal on the way forward in Syria and has been supported by all permanent members of the Security Council. We should not fail to support Mr. Annan, as his efforts may be the only branch to which to cling before the seismic currents of a bloody civil war push Syria over the brink into a state of total collapse.

South Africa is disappointed that, because of the divisions among the members of the Council, the Council has been prevented from executing its responsibilities. Differences within the Council should be addressed in a spirit of compromise and mutual respect, and with the Council's broader responsibility in mind. All members of the Council have consistently expressed their support for the Kofi Annan plan, the Geneva action plan communiqué and the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS).

Yet the common cause that we affirmed when we adopted resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) three months ago has not seemed to prevail. We should have shown the utmost maturity in strategically executing these crucial tasks, taking into account the realities of the situation on the ground. Instead, we allowed narrow interests to destroy our unity of purpose.

We agree with the Joint Special Envoy that the Council must insist that these decisions be implemented, that a strong message should be sent to

all parties involved, and that there will be consequences for their non-compliance with its decisions. We fail to see, however, how the text that was submitted today by the sponsors would end the violence or contribute to the implementation of the six-point plan. Instead, the text, in an unbalanced manner, threatens sanctions against the Government of Syria without realistically allowing any action to be taken against the opposition, which would be permitted to defy the six-point plan without consequence. In similar situations where the international community, including the Security Council, has preferred one side over the other, such bias has resulted in the polarization of the conflict. This is especially true for such fractious societies as Syria's.

The failure of the Council today to reach a balanced agreement threatens the Kofi Annan plan and undermines the possibility of finding a peaceful political solution to the Syrian crisis. Our failure to renew the mandate of UNSMIS — the only functional tool for verifying and corroborating information on the ground and supporting the Annan plan, as recommended by the Secretary-General — is disappointing. While we are concerned about the safety of the observers, South Africa continues to believe that UNSMIS has been a critical part of our effort to find a solution to the Syrian crisis, and should therefore continue its work in one form or the other when conditions on the ground so permit. South Africa is therefore deeply disappointed that the future of UNSMIS is under threat because of the divisions in the Council.

It is for these reasons that South Africa abstained in the voting on draft resolution S/2012/538. South Africa stands ready to work with all members of the Council to achieve a strong, balanced outcome in support of Kofi Annan's efforts and a renewal of the UNSMIS mandate.

In conclusion, for the time being South Africa supports the proposal for a possible technical rollover of UNSMIS for a very short term.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Morocco voted in favour of draft resolution S/2012/538 because it was in line with the recent resolutions of the League of Arab States and our perception of the situation in Syria, which shows quite clearly that no mechanism adopted by the Council to address the crisis has had the hoped-for result and that the parties in Syria have not complied with the plan, including the complete cessation of violence, to which they committed themselves. The number of victims continues to grow, and the violence has reached an unprecedented level.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution because it endorsed the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria adopted in Geneva last month, which laid out the main principles for ensuring a successful political transition in Syria. In our views, the ideas contained therein are in line with the political transition advocated by the Arab League. We also voted in favour because we support the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy and seek a genuine cessation of violence.

Given the fact that the Council was unable to adopt a strong resolution, all that we can do is to voice our disappointment over such a result, whose only loser is the brotherly Syrian people and the region to which it belongs. Up until the final moment, including during last week's intensive negotiations, we remained hopeful that we would achieve consensus among all Council members around a common vision of the plan to be adopted to effectively address a crisis that has continued to intensify in Syria and that has now lasted more than 16 months. We had hoped that the Council would remain united after adopting resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), which laid the foundations for pragmatic action to tackle all aspects of the crisis in Syria. Morocco is convinced that the Council's unified action remains a decisive factor in ensuring the international community's successful achievement of a timely solution to the crisis in Syria.

From the very outset, the League of Arab States has worked with the Council to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria. It is convinced that the parties alone will not be able to end the violence or to pursue dialogue. The violence and the number of Syrian victims have reached a level that prevents the parties from tackling the Syrian crisis through existing mechanisms.

For that reason, the Arab League has urged the Security Council to take strict measures that would enable the Council to work within the framework of Chapter VII of the Charter in order to put an end to the growing violence in Syria, ensure that all members shoulder their responsibilities, and create a climate conducive to dialogue.

In his discussion with members of the Security Council, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States emphasized that the scope of the measures in no way included military intervention. On that basis and in view of its responsibilities within the framework of the League of Arab States, Morocco has worked with other members of the Council to elaborate a strategic vision aimed at a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria

by re-establishing existing mechanisms, including the six-point plan that served as our main reference for such a solution. It included, of course, the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS).

The Council and countries that contributed to UNSMIS were aware of the fact that the dispatch of observers to Syria was somewhat different from other missions. But Morocco chose to support the international effort to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, including after the acceptance of the six-point plan by all parties, whose first demand was the complete cessation of violence and the relaunching of the political process to enable the Syrian people to achieve their legitimate aspirations.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate our firm conviction of the need to continue our common, joint work on restoring unity in the Council. What unites its members is their Charter responsibility and its imperative to prevail over differences of opinion.

We are heartbroken over the suffering of the people in sisterly Syria. A credible solution that restores hope and faith to the people of Syria is necessary to ensure their understanding that the crisis will end and that their aspirations will be fulfilled with the support of the Council.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is deeply concerned over the increasingly challenging situation in Syria. We oppose terrorism and violence in all their forms and strongly condemn the recent killing of civilians and the bomb attack in Damascus on 18 July.

The top priority of the international community now is to fully support and cooperate with Joint Special Envoy Annan's mediation, and to promote the implementation of the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), adopted at its meeting of Foreign Ministers held in Geneva, the relevant Security Council resolutions and Mr. Annan's six-point plan. The international community should urge an immediate ceasefire and cessation of all violence and establish the necessary conditions to resolve the crisis.

To that end, the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS) has played an important and exceptional role. China therefore supports the extension of the UNSMIS mandate and endorses Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's proposal to adjust its tasks accordingly. China calls on the Security Council to send a clear signal in support of Mr. Annan's mediation and promotion of a political settlement to the Syrian crisis. We have vigorously pushed for consensus among Security Council members through consultations. However, draft resolution S/2012/538 submitted by the United Kingdom, the United States and France completely contradicts such aims.

First, the draft resolution is seriously flawed, and its unbalanced content seeks to put pressure on only one party. Experience has shown that such a practice would not help resolve the Syrian issue, but would only derail the matter from the political track. It would not only further aggravate the turmoil, but also cause it to spread to other countries of the region, undermine regional peace and stability, and ultimately harm the interests of the people of Syria and other regional countries.

Secondly, the draft resolution would seriously erode international trust and cooperation on the issue of Syria. Mr. Annan's mediation is an important and realistic way forward towards a political solution of the Syrian issue. It is an important tool. Not long ago, thanks to the efforts of all parties, the ministerial meeting of the Action Group for Syria, initiated by Joint Special Envoy Annan, adopted a final communiqué that forged consensus among the major parties and opened a new window of opportunity for an appropriate settlement of the Syrian crisis. At present, Mr. Annan's efforts to implement the outcome of that meeting are at a critical juncture. However, the draft resolution essentially undermined the consensus reached at the Geneva meeting and seriously disrupted the new round of mediation efforts undertaken by Joint Special Envoy Annan.

Thirdly, sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries are the basic norms governing inter-State relations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. China has no self-interest in the Syrian issue. We have consistently maintained that the future and fate of Syria should be independently decided by the Syrian people, rather than imposed by outside forces. We believe that the Syrian issue must be resolved through political means and that military means would achieve nothing.

That is China's consistent position on international affairs. It is not targeted at any specific incident or moment. Our purpose is to safeguard the interests of the Syrian people and Arab countries, and the interests of all countries — small and medium-sized countries in particular — and to protect the role and authority of

the United Nations and the Security Council, as well as the basic standards that govern international relations.

Fourthly, the draft resolution jeopardizes the unity of the Security Council. The Council was unanimous in adopting resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), displaying a hard-won spirit of unity and cooperation. During consultations on today's draft resolution, the sponsoring countries failed to show any political will or cooperativeness, adopting a rigid and arrogant approach to the reasonable basic concerns of other concerned countries and refusing to make revisions. It is even more regrettable that, in circumstances where the parties were still seriously divided and there was still time for continued consultations, the sponsoring countries refused to heed the calls for further consultation made by China, some other Council members and Joint Special Envoy Annan — until an approach acceptable to all parties could be reached — and pressed for a vote on the draft resolution. China is strongly opposed to such practices.

For the aforementioned reasons, China could not accept today's draft resolution and voted against it. This morning, various countries made statements that confused right and wrong and made unfounded accusations against China. They are completely mistaken and are based on ulterior motives. China is firmly opposed to such behaviour. We have participated in all of the Council's consultations on resolutions concerning Syria in a positive, responsible and constructive manner, with a view to pushing for a ceasefire and a halt to all violence in Syria, as well as for implementation of the communiqué from the Geneva meeting (S/2021/523, annex), of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and of the Annan six-point plan.

China has been committed to reaching a consensus, worked hard for a smooth extension of the mandate of UNSMIS and supported Mr. Annan's mediation efforts. In contrast, a few countries have been eager to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, to fuel the flames and to sow discord in complete disregard of the possible consequences. From the very beginning, they have shown a negative attitude to Mr. Annan's mediation efforts and to the deployment of UNSMIS over the past few months, proclaiming the futility and failure of those efforts.

This time they have repeated their old trick of setting preconditions as obstacles to the extension of UNSMIS's mandate and have accompanied that with an invocation of Chapter VII of the Charter and the threat of sanctions, in an attempt to change or even repudiate the hard-won consensus reached by the action group during the Geneva meeting. They have shown only arrogance, not sincerity, during the consultations. We cannot help questioning their willingness to see UNSMIS's mandate extended and a speedy settlement of the Syrian crisis through a Syrian-led political process. We urge those countries to reflect earnestly on their policy and behaviour and to return immediately to the right road.

At present, some time still remains before the mandate of UNSMIS expires. We hope that the sponsors will change their minds and call on them to do so, in a positive response to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's proposals, by supporting the extension of the UNSMIS mandate with a view to arriving at a political solution to the Syrian question and protecting the fundamental interests of the people of Syria and other countries in the region, as well as to safeguarding the credibility, authority and unity of the Security Council.

China supports Pakistan and South Africa's proposal to adopt a draft resolution on a technical roll-over of the UNSMIS mandate, and hopes that Security Council members can reach a consensus on that proposal as soon as possible.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now speak in my capacity as Permanent Representative of Colombia.

In April of last year, during Colombia's previous presidency of the Security Council, we saw the first signs of a spiral of violent repression that has not ceased and has become more acute by the day. Thousands have died, disappeared, become refugees, been tortured or arbitrarily detained. The world stands appalled at the terrible human tragedy, unusual levels of violence and flagrant lack of respect for human rights that Syrians are enduring. It is deplorable that the Syrian Government has not taken the measures necessary to implement the Joint Special Envoy's plan and resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), and that the opposition has made no contribution to this either.

Colombia voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2012/538) submitted by the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Portugal and the United States, because we believe that its text provides the necessary support and sends a clear message to all parties in Syria on the importance of complying with the commitments and

obligations in the six-point plan and the aforementioned resolutions, as well as with the agreements reached in Geneva within the framework of the Action Group for Syria (S/2021/523, annex). We deplore the fact that differences have prevailed on the many views on and ways of responding to the Syrian crisis, and that we have not been able to arrive at concrete proposals that could help achieve effective progress among the parties. It could have enabled us to find a political way out that met the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of Syrian society.

However uncertain Syria's future may seem, its people have taken the irreversible road of change. The negative results of today's vote are frustrating, but we must not abandon our efforts to arrive at a political solution to the crisis in Syria. Colombia will continue to contribute to efforts to end all forms of violence and violations of human rights, and to find ways to help the Syrian people establish the democratic institutions that will enable them to live together in brotherly peace.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

Upon the request of the sponsor of the draft resolution contained in document S/2012/547/Rev.2, the Council will not take action thereon.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The people and Government of Syria had indeed expected that the Security Council, having reached the age of reason — that is, being 67 years old — would act positively and objectively to aid our country. Any such positive contribution would stem directly from the benefits of a rich culture and the long experience that the Council has acquired over decades in determining what must be done to help the people and Government of Syria. That can be achieved by respecting the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law, and has nothing to do with projecting the national interest of any member onto the agenda of the Security Council, an agenda that is essentially focused on the maintenance of international peace and security.

Before every Security Council meeting on the situation in Syria, the concerns of the Syrian people increase and their tensions heighten. As we have long warned, this is due mainly to the suspicious timing of those meetings and the treacherous terrorist acts that have affected many innocent Syrians, their institutions, their cadres and their human and material resources. Members no doubt remember that the attacks and massacres that have terrorized many people throughout Syria have coincided with Security Council debates on the situation in my country. Regrettably, all Syrians have just seen a recurrence of that phenomenon. Yesterday morning, terrorist devastation reached ministers and leaders of security institutions while they were meeting in the Syrian capital, Damascus. Equally regrettably, the Council has again failed to condemn that act. However, we do thank the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan, for condemning that terrorist act.

If such a terrorist act can fail to incur the immediate, strong condemnation of the Security Council, that means that all the consensus the international community has built on combating terrorism has been mere talk. That failure sends the wrong message to terrorists all around the world, which is that they are beyond accountability. That failure also means that any talk of support for a peaceful political solution in Syria and an end to violence is mere sloganeering to gain time, delude international and Syrian public opinion, and avoid implementing the Kofi Annan plan.

Syria has officially welcomed the final communiqué of the 30 June meeting in Geneva (S/2012/523, annex), especially its basic points about commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, putting an end to violence and human rights violations, disarming armed groups, the need to avoid militarizing the situation, protecting civilians and launching a Syrian-led political process. All of that underscores that it is the Syrian people alone who can come to the table to make decisions about their future, in dialogue without foreign intervention.

Is there anyone in this Chamber who disagrees that that is a reasonable statement? If there is no opposition to the outcome of the Geneva meeting, based on the Annan plan of action, why can the Council not agree on a simple, purely procedural matter, which is the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS), in keeping with the basic principles that I just listed and that have been agreed to by all who participated in the Geneva meeting?

Our endorsement of the outcome of that meeting was an example of our open approach to seeking a peaceful

solution to the crisis in Syria and in keeping with our positive response to the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy and UNSMIS. In this context, we note that, on his visit to Damascus, Mr. Annan held constructive and positive talks, as he himself has emphasized and reiterated. A number of mechanisms have been agreed for putting an end to violence, restoring peace and security throughout my country, and preparing conditions conducive to a comprehensive Syrian-led national dialogue among all Syrians, in accordance with the Annan plan.

It has become clear to all that the success of the Annan plan and of UNSMIS — which of course have the full support of the Syrian Government, which has more interest than any other in seeing the plan succeed — will require sincere international commitment and political will on the part of all parties, especially those that have influence on the armed opposition groups. What is needed is the political will to encourage dialogue, reject violence and militarization, stop arming and financing terrorist groups, and lift the illegitimate unilateral sanctions against the Syrian people.

I must draw attention to the fact that some countries are still bent on undermining any serious effort to solve the problem in Syria peacefully. That has been made very clear by their efforts to ensure that the Annan plan fails by twisting their interpretations of the communiqué and rushing to hold parallel meetings under the so-called Group of Friends of the Syrian people. In their objectives and purposes, those meetings run contrary to the Annan plan, which Syria and the international community accept, and to the outcome of the Geneva meeting.

Some parties with a direct interest in fanning the flames of the crisis in Syria make a habit of giving erroneous information and distorting the facts about Syria and the response of the Syrian Government to the crisis. They summarize the situation by drawing a misleading picture that seeks to advance the idea that there is a tyrannical regime killing its unarmed citizens, whereas the crisis in Syria is a complex, multidimensional problem with internal and external ramifications.

At the internal level, there are some who have peacefully called for reform and dialogue and expressed their legitimate concerns through a political process. The Government has not denied those concerns, but rather considers them a priority. On the other hand, there are those misguided others who have taken up arms and destroyed public and private property. They have made mistakes, but the road for them to return to their senses is still open, as manifest in the amnesty declared for all who turn in their weapons. About 4,302 people have benefited from the amnesty through 17 July 2012. Some of these various people belonged to terrorist and non-terrorist groups that receive external support and carry out maimings and killings of civilians and military personnel. They have also committed the massacres that have been brought to the attention of the meetings of the Security Council devoted to the situation in Syria.

Those groups include elements from Al-Qaida, Arab and non-Arab jihadists and extremist terrorist groups. Some at the United Nations would be only too happy to call them third-party groups. The Syrian State, however, as a responsible Government that is supposed to protect its people like all other responsible Governments in the world, cannot accept their acts.

In that respect, the majority of the Syrian people, including sectors of the responsible nationalist opposition, rejects external intervention and rejects violence. They also reject arms and reject the blowing up of electricity plants. During this very hot summer, they rejected assassinations. They rejected the destruction of television stations and gas and oil pipelines as a means to attain the desired reforms in Syria.

Indeed, I am sure that some members of the Council that have decided to close their embassies in Damascus and to withdraw their ambassadors do not know that the armed groups have three times attacked electric power plants in Syria — the latest attack was on the day before yesterday.

There are some countries that from the start adopted a balanced and constructive position towards the Syrian problem and emphasized the need to solve the problem peacefully through dialogue and political means, basing their positions on the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

There are others, however, that seek to interfere in the Syrian situation in a flagrant manner. They beat the drums of war and made themselves part of the crisis by providing arms and funds, political and media support and logistical support to the armed groups in Syria that incite violence and terrorism. Imposing sanctions is illegitimate and harms the Syrian people. Such sanctions have negatively impacted their daily lives, ignoring all the principles of good-neighbourliness and the international norms and instruments that

criminalize such actions. Those States have severed their diplomatic relations with Syria, which has closed dialogue and all channels of direct communications. To those countries, we say, in the name of our people, that if they want to impose the law of the jungle on others and if they find that that is the logical course of action, then they should allow that course in their own countries as well.

Those who sympathize with the armed groups and the terrorists in Syria should host them in their own countries and provide them with what they want, namely, the freedom to carry weapons and destroy the social fabric and the structures of the State under the slogans of realizing democracy and calling for reforms.

What has been said repeatedly of late in the media about chemical weapons and Syria's intention to use them has no basis in fact whatsoever. The media is trying to plant some insidious intentions, and if those insinuations reflect anything at all, they reflect the intentions of some who would want to use chemical materials against our people in order to find a pretext to accuse the Syrian Government and garner the support of the Security Council and international public opinion against Syria.

All Syrians are concerned and seek to participate on the basis of reconciliation, joint action and tolerance in order to reconstruct what has been destroyed by the war and anarchy and to proceed to re-establishing the rule of law and reshaping peace and stability. They do not seek to invoke Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations or seek external military intervention, of which the Security Council's memory is full of examples. One need only look at the disasters that it has imposed on the peoples of States Members of the Organization against which such interventions were applied.

It is up to us Syrians, including the national opposition, to realize that those countries that claim to be eager to support the Syrian people and their interests are not in any way looking for a peaceful solution that would maintain the unity, stability and independence of the country and achieve the common aspirations of the Syrian peoples. Those so-called friends of Syria are targeting the Syrian State and people and the roles played by Syria at the Arab, Islamic and regional levels by using the political contradictions that have surfaced in the Syrian arena during the crisis.

Who can believe those who deceived the Arabs by imposing the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration on us, assassinated the first Syrian Minister of War and bombarded the Syrian Parliament in 1945. They opened a wound that is still bleeding in Palestine, invaded Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and provided all forms of political, military and diplomatic support to Israel so that it could occupy the Syrian Golan and the Palestinian territories and what remains of the Lebanese territory. Anyone who believes that those people are today willing to provide Syria with anything that would serve its real interests is deluded.

Consequently, it is incumbent upon all of us to realize that the only solution must be a Syrian solution through a comprehensive and inclusive Syrian political process that satisfies the aspirations of the Syrian people in a national dialogue in which all participate under the umbrella of the homeland in order to establish a democratic, pluralistic country where all enjoy equality before the law, far from any political or ideological tendencies, a State where political and economic opportunities are available to each and everyone without discrimination, where there are democratic, transparent and free elections in which all compete, as is the case in other countries.

The Syrians alone are capable of defending their country and preserving its invincibility against any geopolitical interest that seeks to attack its existence and dignity. Let us heal our wounds. Let us recall our common history. Let us understand what is being plotted against us. Let us build our homeland, a country that is strong enough to withstand any heinous aggression.

I would like to conclude by quoting the wisdom of a Sufi philosopher who lived in Syria in the tenth century and who advised his students and followers:

> "My children, the rational individual person must not lose his perspicacity when he participates in writing history. Those who have had a problem with the Devil should not seek to find a solution by consulting Satan."

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.